



NATIONAL GAY & LESBIAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

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Chairman Julius Genachowski
Commissioner Meredith Attwell Baker
Commissioner Mignon Clyburn
Commissioner Michael J. Copps
Commissioner Robert M. McDowell
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20554

RE: In the Matter of Preserving the Open Internet (GN Docket No. 09-191) and Broadband Industry Practices (WC Docket No. 07-52)

Dear Chairman Genachowski and Commissioners:

The National Gay & Lesbian Chamber of Commerce® (NGLCC) commends you on the recent National Broadband Plan. The strategy you have laid out seems certain to propel economic growth for years to come, bringing opportunity to millions who have lacked the wherewithal to benefit fully from the ongoing Internet revolution.

The NGLCC is the business advocate and direct link between lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) business owners, corporations and government. The NGLCC represents the interests of more than 1.4 million LGBT-owned businesses in the United States and is the umbrella organization for 61 state, local and international LGBT chambers of commerce and business organizations.

This plan is of special to interest to us. As I am sure you know, members of the LGBT community have found particular acceptance in the high-tech industry, thanks in part to the accepting and meritocratic nature of most high tech workplaces and an industry culture that, for the most part, values creativity and excellence above all else.


But we know first-hand how important technology is to all citizens in ways that go well beyond the merely technical. Because the Internet allows remote participation, even communications via pseudonyms, we were able to gather, exchange ideas and express ourselves in ways that were not always so easy in a physical world that too often met us with jeers, ostracism, even violence. The Internet gave us a sounding board and soapbox all in one. It has been a lifeline for individual and collective expression as well as LGBT-owned media and business, many of which struggled to gain acceptance in the brick-and-mortar world.

Yet, as excellent as the plan is, we are concerned that its benefits may be outweighed by the potential harms of **“open Internet” or “net neutrality” rules proposed in this docket. In our view, concerns of net neutrality** would be warranted but for the fact that the concern is, has been and will likely remain theoretical for the foreseeable future. And while we are of course aware of the handful of problems that have arisen over the past few years, those problems were isolated, well publicized and quickly dispatched. The simple fact is no company today can withstand the public ridicule that is sure to follow if it violates the public trust in a free and open Internet.

Several commenters have questioned whether the proposed rules would have an adverse impact on the cost of broadband for residential and small business customers. In our view, the Commission must answer this question before adopting new rules. It is critical that LGBT-owned small businesses not be forced to absorb higher prices for broadband services that historically have either stayed the same or fallen while upload and download speeds have increased.

In closing, let us say it once more: This is a wonderful plan. It would be a shame if the great promise contained in it were sullied by a handful of well intentioned regulations that seem destined to do more harm than good.

Sincerely,



Justin C. Nelson
Co-Founder and President
National Gay & Lesbian Chamber of Commerce